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complete copy of the claims in "marked up" form showing the deletions and additions is provided on separate pages after this amendment and response.

**CLAIMS IN "CLEAN" FORM**

- 1 1. (Amended) A release control method for providing early deployment releases of a  
2 software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new  
3 features and platforms, the method comprising the steps of:  
4 a. providing an early development branch of the software system that is  
5 designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing  
6 support for new features and platforms;  
7 b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested  
8 software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules  
9 comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new  
10 platforms;  
11 c. committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and  
12 platforms into the early development branch; and  
13 d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development  
14 release containing pre-tested software modules for new features and  
15 platforms.
- 1 2. (Amended) The release control method of claim 1 comprising the additional step  
2 of repeating steps c and d on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of  
3 cycles.
- 1 3. (Amended) The release control method of claim 1 wherein the pre-tested software  
2 module is received at a pre-integration branch that is separate from the early  
3 development branch, and wherein the committing step comprises committing pre-  
4 tested software modules for new features and platforms from a pre-integration  
5 branch into the early development branch.

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- C2
- 1 8. (Amended) A system for providing early deployment releases of a software  
2 system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and  
3 platforms, comprising:  
4 a. an early development branch of the software system designated for  
5 incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new  
6 features and platforms;  
7 b. logic for receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-  
8 tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules  
9 comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new  
10 platforms;  
11 c. logic for committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and  
12 platforms into the early development branch;  
13 d. using the early development branch, logic for generating a new early  
14 development release containing pre-tested software modules for new  
15 features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of  
16 cycles; and  
17 e. logic for generating said new early development release containing pre-  
18 tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular  
19 recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles.

- 1 9. (Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the logic for committing comprises  
2 logic for committing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms  
3 from a pre-integration branch into the early development branch.

- C3
- 1 14. (Amended) A product release method for controlling the release of software  
2 system code based on a fixed frequency, the method comprising the steps of:  
3 a. selecting one or more features for inclusion in a new release of the  
4 software system code base, wherein a quantity of features selected will allow a  
5 next scheduled release of the software system code base to be completed at a  
6 required time;  
7 b. testing the quantity of features selected in a plurality of business units;

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- C 3
- 8 c. providing the quantity of features selected to a pre-integration branch of
  - 9 the software system code base only when testing in the business units is
  - 10 successful;
  - 11 d. testing the quantity of features selected in the pre-integration branch;
  - 12 e. providing the quantity of features selected to a development branch only
  - 13 when testing in the business units is successful and in time to allow the next
  - 14 scheduled release of the software system code base to be completed in the
  - 15 required time.
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- 1 15. (Not Amended) The method of claim 14 comprising the additional steps of:
- 2 a. completing testing of a modified software system code base in the
  - 3 development branch which contains the quantity of features selected and
  - 4 tested in the pre-integration branch; and
  - 5 b. releasing the modified software system code base at the required time.
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- C 4
- 1 19. (New) A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
- 2 receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new
  - 3 features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-
  - 4 integration branches;
  - 5 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the
  - 6 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-
  - 7 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and
  - 8 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-
  - 9 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules
  - 10 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to
  - 11 the central pre-integration branches.
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- 1 20. (New) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating,
- 2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing
  - 3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of

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4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.

1 21. (New) A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or  
3 platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration  
4 branches;  
5 at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of  
6 that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature  
7 individually, and in combination with all other features;  
8 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
9 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
10 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
11 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
12 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
13 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
14 the central pre-integration branches.

1 22. (New) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating,  
2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing  
3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of  
4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.

1 23. (New) A computer-readable medium comprising one or more stored sequences of  
2 instructions for providing release control using early deployment releases of a  
3 software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new  
4 features and platforms, which instructions, when executed by one or more  
5 processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the steps of:  
6 a. providing an early development branch of a software release that is  
7 designated for incorporation of support for new features and platforms;

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- 8           b.     receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested  
9               source code modules, wherein each of the pre-tested source code modules  
10              comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new  
11              platforms;  
12           c.     committing the pre-tested source code for new features and platforms into  
13              the early development branch; and  
14           d.     using the early development branch, generating a new early development  
15              release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms.

- C4
- 1   24.   (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising  
2       the steps of:  
3       receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new  
4       features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-  
5       integration branches;  
6       committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
7       one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
8       integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
9       committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
10       integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
11       have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
12       the central pre-integration branches.

- 1   25.   (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising  
2       the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early  
3       development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and  
4       platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been  
5       committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development  
6       branch.

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1 26. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising  
2 the steps of:  
3 receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or  
4 platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration  
5 branches;  
6 at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of  
7 that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature  
8 individually, and in combination with all other features;  
9 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
10 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
11 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
12 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
13 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
14 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
15 the central pre-integration branches.

1 27. (New) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising  
2 the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early  
3 development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and  
4 platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been  
5 committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development  
6 branch.

1 28. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new  
3 features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-  
4 integration branches;  
5 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
6 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
7 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

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8 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
9 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
10 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
11 the central pre-integration branches.

1 29. (New) A system as recited in Claim 28, further comprising the step of generating,  
2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing  
3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of  
4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.

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1 30. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or  
3 platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration  
4 branches;  
5 at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of  
6 that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature  
7 individually, and in combination with all other features;  
8 committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the  
9 one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-  
10 integration branch only when such testing is successful; and  
11 committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-  
12 integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules  
13 have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to  
14 the central pre-integration branches.

1 31. (New) A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the step of generating,  
2 using the early development branch, a new early development release containing  
3 pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of  
4 software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-  
5 integration branch to the early development branch.